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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, DCHA/OFDA, AND AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, USAID/SFO AND FAS
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NSC FOR PMARCHAM AND MMAGAN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
USUN FOR TMALY
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SUDAN - FLOOD RESPONSE IN SOUTHERN SUDAN

REF: Khartoum 1271

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¶1. Summary. Since June, flooding has affected more than 91,000 people in Lakes, Warrab, Unity, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, and Jonglei states in Southern Sudan, according to the U.N. It is unclear whether the floods are worse than in previous years; however, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) report that more people are affected this year due to the influx of returnees. Poorly constructed roads appear to have caused flooding in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity states. The U.N. has been slow to coordinate assistance in Southern Sudan, and many information gaps remain. USAID plans to provide USD 600,000 to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Emergency Response Fund and USD 745,000 to Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) to airlift food and supplies to remote areas. End summary.

POORLY CONSTRUCTED ROADS CAUSE FLOODS

¶2. In some areas of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity states, poorly engineered roads appear to have caused flooding, rather than excessive rainfall. For example, in Aweil East County, which received more than 20,000 returnees in 2007, the new road constructed by the Eyat Road Construction Company crossing the Wakabil River has caused flooding 8 km from Aweil town. A USAID field monitor participated in an assessment of the area and reported that the road's culverts are insufficient, causing flooding on the western side of the road. As a result, an estimated 8,000 people have been displaced.

¶3. While humanitarian agencies are responding in Aweil, the Eyat Road Construction Company has also donated 4.5 metric tons of sorghum and is drilling one borehole on the eastern side of the road, where the government plans to accommodate flood-affected families. The company has used its machinery to clear the ground for settlement at the new site. In private conversations with USAID staff, government officials reported that they are registering affected populations and assessing damage to request additional compensation from the company.

¶4. In Unity State, as reported reftel, humanitarian staff and government officials have not yet decided how to address the issue

with private companies. However, U.N. staff report that they are determining how to best use this year's flooding as an example to advocate for better road construction as Southern Sudan develops.

FLOODING AFFECTS RETURNEES, FOOD SECURITY

¶15. Flooding has especially affected returnees, according to humanitarian agencies. Many returnees were unable to plant until late in the planting season, as their first priority upon return had been constructing shelter. Heavy early rains reportedly destroyed the nascent crops of many returnees. While the particulars vary by situation, returnees are generally eligible to receive an initial three-month food ration and limited subsequent rations if needed. In Pagak, eastern Upper Nile State, USAID staff observed returnees, including visibly malnourished children, who had walked 200 km from Longechuk County after their initial three-month ration had run out. Flooding had prevented relief agencies from delivering a second installment of food aid to Longechuk County, so the returnees walked to the Pagak way station, which they had passed through during their return journey. Approximately 1,000 returnees have come back to Pagak to request second rations, according to Adventist Development and Relief Agency, which is distributing food at the way station.

¶16. The U.N. was unable to deliver food aid to 42 percent of intended beneficiaries in July, and a reduced harvest for this planting season appears likely at a time when Southern Sudan's population is rapidly increasing. On August 28, the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) reported that flooding has destroyed crops in areas of Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei, and Lakes states, potentially extending the hunger period through December. During a recent USAID visit to Jonglei State, the governor reported that flooding has destroyed more than 85 percent of crops in at least five counties: Pochalla, Akobo, Nyriol, Fangak, and Bor.

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¶17. However, FEWS NET reported that as flood waters recede in November and December, an increase in the availability of fish, water plants, and milk is likely to improve conditions. FEWS NET and Jonglei officials reported that in some pockets, it may be possible to plant specific crops such as sorghum in November, mitigating some of the effects of the flood damage.

U.N. COORDINATION LACKLUSTER

¶18. The U.N. has been slow to coordinate assistance at the state and county level due to staff shortages. Because of internal transition, the U.N. Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) lacks permanent officers in two of the most affected states, Unity and Jonglei, and the lead RCO officer in Upper Nile was on vacation during the flooding. OCHA's Southern Sudan director recently departed post, further straining limited human resources. U.N. agencies have not stepped in to play an effective role in sector-level coordination, although the U.N. Joint Logistics Center has produced useful maps and attempted to extract information on non-food item stocks from NGOs.

¶19. U.N. leadership is particularly needed to gather and analyze information. Many flood-affected areas in Southern Sudan remain completely inaccessible, making donors and program staff even more reliant on the limited available information to make program decisions. While the U.N. is now hosting weekly coordination meetings in Juba and has assembled comprehensive reports in each state, the absence of this coordination in July and early August complicated USAID's efforts to provide immediate assistance.

¶10. The planning process for the countrywide U.N. Flash Appeal in August was a much-needed catalyst to promote information sharing and response planning in the south. Through the Flash Appeal, the U.N. and partners have requested more than USD 20 million to provide relief and recovery assistance throughout Sudan, including the

north. It is not yet clear whether donors will provide substantial funding toward this appeal.

¶11. The U.N. Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which has a fleet of helicopters, has played only a small role in relief efforts. The Jonglei State Governor told USAID that UNMIS denied his request to transport supplies to flood-affected areas; a Moldovan oil company provided the assistance instead. OCHA staff noted that, after much negotiation, UNMIS agreed to provide eight single flight legs for flood assistance. It remains to be seen whether UNMIS fulfills this minimal pledge.

USAID RESPONSE

¶12. The USAID offices of Food for Peace and U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance plan to provide more than USD 1.3 million in assistance for flood-affected communities in Southern Sudan. USAID plans to provide USD 745,600 to NPA to fly food and relief supplies to remote areas of Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei states. The supplies include household items and fishing kits, which will help address food security issues. In addition, USAID plans to provide USD 600,000 to OCHA's Emergency Response Fund. Through this mechanism, NGOs can obtain small grants for localized response efforts. Other current USAID partners are responding through existing programs in flood-affected areas. USAID will continue to monitor the situation and provide additional reporting as needed.

FERNANDEZ